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*THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF CARLYLE AND RUSKIN.* By Frederick William Roe. New York. Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1921. 8vo, pp. viii, 335. Price, \$3.

Professor Roe has produced a good book, on an interesting and vitally important subject. For the nineteenth century, far from settling the question of what ailed society, passed it on to us; and it cannot be said that we have made much progress. Still, here and there a writer of the present day throws light on some particular phase of the problem. For example, the late Andrew D. White in his later years impressed on a good many audiences the immense superiority of evolution over revolution, in the regulation of human affairs. Moreover, it is coming to be recognized that in the sphere of government as well as in the natural world changes generally do come about not so much by cataclysmic movements as by the slow and gradual growth of public opinion; and that the outbursts of human fury which we know as wars and revolutions (like the French Revolution and the World War) do not always bring about the changes that are most to be desired, since action is sure to be followed by reaction.

Both Carlyle and Ruskin virtually antedate the period when acceptance of the Darwinian theories made evolution the guiding principle of thinking about the cosmos. In 1859 Carlyle was sixty-four years old and for thirty years had held unchanged views of the insignificance, the incompetence, and the general depravity of common men. His fellow-countrymen numbered twenty-seven millions, "mostly fools." History was for him the essence of innumerable biographies—of leaders, kings, men of vision, scarcely of the common folk, ignorant and depraved as they were. Ruskin, too, was forty at that time and probably knew and cared as little about biological science as did Carlyle. The adaptation of evolutionary ideas to the solution of social problems is a thing which neither Carlyle nor Ruskin dreamed of. To some considerable extent, then, has our world moved on from them.

Still, we have much to learn from these apostles of divine discontent. Carlyle's formula for the regeneration of society was "Work"; Ruskin's was "Joy in work." Both were fundamentally right. Properly interpreted, both formulae are as effective curatives to-day as ever. The trouble with these formulae, like the trouble with Christianity, is to get them tried. They will surely work with nations as they have worked with individuals.

A good feature of Dr. Roe's book is his introductory survey of industrial and social conditions in the early nineteenth century. The industrialization of northern England permitted and invited a vast increase in population. The population of Lancashire between 1700 and 1831 increased eight hundred per

cent. The application of steam to the power loom brought in the factory system, the source of England's "most troublesome problems and her darkest conditions." It brought in the wage-earner and the exploiter of labor. It was not long before twenty thousand persons in Manchester alone and forty-five thousand in Liverpool were living in damp and filthy cellars. For a long time the odds against the wage-earners were immense. These odds were increased by the prevailing doctrine of *laissez faire* which came in with Adam Smith and James Bentham, as a reaction again the rigid economic control by government which had prevailed in the previous century; perhaps they were increased also by the comfortable middle class or bourgeois doctrine expressed by Pope in the words, "Whatever is, is right." In a large sense, this dogma is probably true; but when babies are starving, it is hard to find comfort in this armchair doctrine.

Professor Roe dwells to good purpose on Carlyle's deep and constant interest in social conditions and his numerous visits to factories and mines and homes of toilers. Carlyle wrote on the basis of an intimate, first-hand knowledge of how the workers lived. This interest in the welfare of the masses was the direct outcome of his emergence from the dark region of doubt (the Everlasting Nay) and indifference into that luminous realm of the Everlasting Yea, of belief in God's presence in the world and of man's kinship with the divine. It was his belief that this sense of the spiritual was the chief need of men in the solution of pressing social problems. And this belief has never been discredited.

With this sense of the spiritual in human life, why was Carlyle nevertheless the most miserable of men, as Dr. Barry speaks of him? Why, with God at the very heart of the universe, was it in effect the worst of all possible worlds? The answer seems to lie in the fact that Carlyle, like his disciple twenty-five years later, was

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born.

He had intellectually thrown off Calvinism, but he still lived as if this were a lost world. God was to him theoretically Divine Love, but practically the stern Ruler of a universe where no one had any vested right to happiness. Thus, like Browning's Paracelsus, Carlyle, with his stern gospel of work as the universal panacea, loving Man but despising foolish men, aspired and failed. To him was never granted the beatific vision which the Swiss physician so magnificently described in his swan-song:

In my own heart love had not been made wise  
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,  
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,  
To see a good in evil, and a hope

In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud  
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim  
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,  
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;  
All with a touch of nobleness, despite  
Their error, upward tending all though weak.

Dr. Roe thinks Ruskin must have first become acquainted with Carlyle as early as 1850. A quarter of a century separated their births; yet they found themselves kindred spirits. Of Carlyle's books Ruskin most admired *Past and Present*, *Latter Day Pamphlets*, and *Sartor Resartus*. In these he thought that Carlyle had said "all that needs to be said, and far better than I shall ever say it again."

Carlyle, as we have seen, never got beyond the rather vague admonition to work, under leaders who should rise above the level of the mass and somehow get themselves accepted as masters or rulers. For him, economics was only the dismal science, which he apparently took no pains to master, but treated with contempt. The impersonal, scientific attitude of its writers repelled him. The world was not to be saved by the prescriptions of Malthus or Mill; rather, he thought, by repudiating these false teachers and all their doctrines. If the rich would work less at game-preserving and more at leadership, all would be well. This was doubtless true, but it did not get the world very far, after all.

When Ruskin, a quarter of a century later, opened his eyes to social conditions, he found no great change since 1832, except that continued division of labor had robbed it more completely than ever of its meaning and reduced the laborer to a galley slave, blindly repeating the same motions over and over. It became Ruskin's dream, then, to restore to labor the creative impulse, to give it a *raison d'être* beyond the mere necessity of keeping up life, to induce the laborer to work honestly, intelligently, joyously. To this end he would do away with cutthroat competition, with its tendency toward the sweatshop; he would reduce the use of machinery to a minimum, and would have everybody do some work with his hands; he would restore the individuality of the worker.

Neither Carlyle nor Ruskin had confidence in the people's government of themselves. Democracy was a failure; only an aristocracy or constitutional monarchy could succeed and endure. There would always be a class of mean, servile folk who had no business to govern themselves. Neither Carlyle nor Ruskin could see that the nature of the proletariat was constantly changing; that our modern American formula of "three generations from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves" was applicable in a measure to people everywhere. The backward eddies are more apparent than real. Each generation is a little better able to govern itself than was its predecessor.

Yet in spite of their limitations, the influence of these two men has been great, Ruskin's probably greater than Carlyle's. St. George's Guild was a failure; Ruskin's fortune was wasted in a futile attempt to solve practically the problem of better living; yet steadily Ruskin's insistence that the life was more than meat and the body more than raiment has told. Mr. McKail thinks that "his influence has been, and continues to be, immense. It is perhaps greater, so far at least as England is concerned, than that of any other single thinker or teacher. His social doctrine was germinal; it colors the whole fabric of modern thought, and shapes the whole fabric of modern practice."

Professor Roe's book is a welcome addition to the growing mass of literature on these two great writers. He has arranged his material well, and has exhibited a proper sense of proportion and restraint. We know of no more illuminating study of these two Heralds of the New Day.

CLARK S. NORTHUP

Cornell University

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*SVERRIS SAGA ETTER CODEX AM 327*, 4°. Utgjevi av Den Norske Historiske Kildeskriftkommission ved Gustav Indrebø. Christiania, 1920, Pp. LXXVIII+214.

The Arnarnagnæan codex 327 of the Saga of King Sverre is a parchment Ms. of 92 leaves written about the year 1300. It is preserved almost complete, only a few pages being lacking, and is in excellent condition. A facsimile page of it was published in Kålund's *Palæografisk Atlas, Norsk-Islandske Afdeling*, 1905, as nr. 42, showing it to be a beautifully written manuscript with not a few interesting palæographic features. The original must have been composed ca. 1185, but that is not in existence; there are four copies, however, of which the present is the oldest. The saga is also contained in the *Eirspennil* (AM 47), which was edited for the Kildeskriftkommission in 1916 by Professor Finnur Jónsson, and where the Sverris Saga is found pp. 255-438. The editor of the *Eirspennil* dates it the first quarter of the XIVth century (p. VII). The Sverris Saga is further found in the *Flat Island Book*, date ca. 1380, and finally in the *Skalholt Book* (AM 81 a, fol), as its first 64 leaves; the date of the latter is given by Kålund as the XVth century. Both of these have also been published, the last in a critical edition for the Kildeskriftkommission in 1910.<sup>1</sup> In connection with the present edition I take occasion to note the fact that this Commission for the publication of documents that are in the

<sup>1</sup> The Flat Island Book was edited by G. Vigfusson and C. R. Unger in 1858-1868.